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The Season of Storms

Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne. In Florida's 2004 season of storms, each name represented a hurricane that was powerful and destructive in its own right. However, with all four hitting within a six-week period from mid-August to the end of September, their cumulative effect made history.

It started Friday, August 13, when Hurricane Charley, a category 2 storm, crawled up the west coast of Florida with its eye on the Tampa Bay area. That afternoon however, Charley suddenly shifted to the northeast and increased in intensity to a category 4 hurricane, slamming into Charlotte County and quickly following Highway 17 northeast through Central Florida.

For the next few weeks, The HSUS coordinated companion animal response efforts for Charlotte, Hardee, and DeSoto
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SERO Director Laura Bevan with one of the dogs sheltered during last year's Florida hurricanes.



SANDY CHRISTIANSEN/HSUS

Horrors of Hog Dog Fighting Revealed in Raid

This past December, law enforcement authorities made a coordinated sweep across four states, shutting down the nation's

largest hog dog fighting operation over the course of a weekend. Federal and state authorities, accompanied by members of HSUS's anti-animal-fighting task force, participated in a multi-state raid in Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, and Arizona. Hundreds of animals were seized and several of the fighting ring's organizers were arrested on a variety of felony charges, including animal cruelty.

SERO Regional Coordinator Sandy Christiansen was on site in South Carolina where many of the animals were seized. He coordinated efforts to move them to safe shelter over a multi-state area. Many of the dogs, scarred and injured from the fighting arena, were found either chained or penned up in squalid conditions. Hogs were found with broken legs and ears barely attached to their skulls.

"The practice of staging fights between pit bulls and captured hogs is illegal under the laws prohibiting animal fighting in South Carolina," said South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster. "Like dogfighting,



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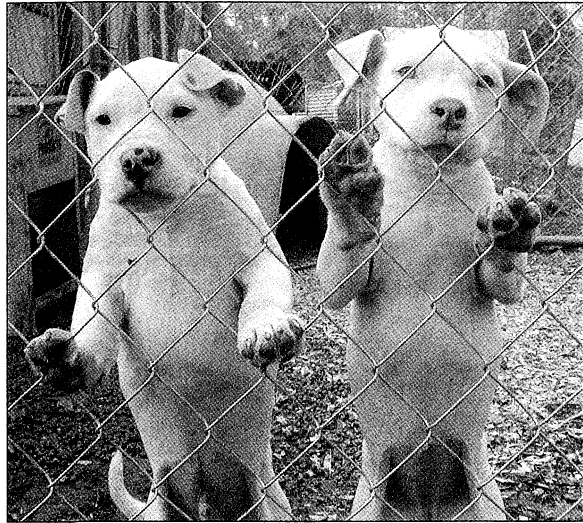
these activities are barbaric, inhumane, and will be vigorously prosecuted in South Carolina."

Hog dog fights, also known as "hog dog rodeos" or "hog catch trials," are a form of animal fighting in which trained pit bulls are put into a small arena to chase down and pin wild hogs. The pigs—like the one above—emerge from the events with severe injuries. The activity came into the public spotlight when an Alabama television station released undercover footage taken at a bloody hog dog event. Since then, deeper investigation by The HSUS has revealed hog dog fights to be a growing phenomenon, organized regularly in at least 10 states.

North Carolina and Tennessee: Welcome to the Region

As of February 1, 2005, North Carolina and Tennessee joined the states covered by HSUS's Southeast Regional Office. Our staff looks forward to working with animal advocates in these states. You can reach our office at 1624 Metropolitan Cir., Ste. B, Tallahassee, FL 32308; 850-386-3435; www.hsus.org/sero.

SC Task Force Helps Stop Major Dogfighter



LAURA BEVAN/HSUS

Combating animal fighting has long been a priority for our office. The fact that people pit two animals in an enclosed area to tear each other apart for human entertainment and financial gain is proof that we are not as a civilized as we like to believe.

Now one of our states has launched an organized campaign to stop animal fighting, and its efforts are paying off. In South Carolina, David Tant, believed by some to be the number-two breeder of fighting pit bulls in the United States, received 40 years in prison after pleading guilty to dogfighting and assault charges.

The case was a victory for an animal fighting task force brought together and supported by South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster. The HSUS has been a member of the task force since its

inception, and has provided much of the expert testimony on the blood sport and its participants. "It is amazing what is being accomplished by this partnership of state law enforcement and humane agencies," says SERO's Laura Bevan. "We hope it will be the model for other states to combat animal fighting in general."

South Carolina is also unique in that the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) has an officer whose primary job is the investigation of dogfighting. The task force raised the money—which

came from The HSUS and other animal groups and individuals throughout South Carolina—to fund the position. No other state has a dedicated law enforcement officer to investigate animal fighting, and we commend South Carolina for being the first.

Another expense shouldered by South Carolina animal shelters is the long-term care of fighting animals seized during investigations. Tant's 50 pit bulls cost Charleston County well over \$100,000 before Tant pled guilty. Because dogs trained for fighting are aggressive and unsuitable for adoption, each dog had to be housed separately before finally being euthanized once the case was over. South Carolina lawmakers are being asked this session to approve a bill updating the animal fighting statute to allow for an expedited hearing on the disposition of fighting animals.

The HSUS, Fund for Animals Join Forces

The HSUS and The Fund for Animals (The Fund) officially joined forces in an unprecedented and historic combination on January 1, 2005. This is the first time in the history of the animal protection movement that two national, high-profile organizations have united in order to advance their common mission.

"Our groups have decided to join forces not out of necessity, but because we believe we can do more to help animals together

than we can do operating separately," said David O. Wiebers, M.D., chair of The HSUS's board of directors.

The two groups plan to operate their advocacy programs under the banner of The HSUS, building a new external affairs department to focus on major defining issues such as fur, sport hunting, factory farming, and malicious animal cruelty, including animal fighting. They will pursue these goals with a multifaceted approach involving

Cockfighting Also Exposed

While the South Carolina Animal Fighting Task Force has focused much of its efforts so far on dogfighting, cockfighting has also made its prevalence known. Commissioner of Agriculture Charles Ray Sharpe pled guilty and resigned his post following an indictment related to activities designed to protect an organized network of cockfighters. The charges included extortion, money laundering, and making false statements to federal law enforcement officials.

"Commissioner Sharpe abetted a barbaric form of animal cruelty, broke a range of federal laws, and completely violated the public's trust," said HSUS President and CEO Wayne Pacelle. "In exchange for thousands of dollars, he used his connections and his stature to provide protection for an organized criminal network of cockfighters." Bills filed in the South Carolina Legislature would increase the penalty for cockfighting from a misdemeanor to a felony.



HSUS

This bird wears the artificial spurs used in cockfighting.

investigations, litigation, communications, and professional campaigning.

"With our new campaigns, we will create meaningful social change for animals," said Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The HSUS. "Our goal is nothing short of a kinder society, where compassionate individuals join with us to ensure that animals are not abused either in random acts of cruelty or in institutional settings, such as industrial factory farms."

Ending the Year Investigating Dogfighting

With SERO's focus on stopping animal fighting in this region, it was appropriate that staff members saw out 2004 assisting in a dogfighting case. On December 31, the Gadsden County Sheriff's Office asked for help in reviewing evidence at a property where 26 pit bulls were seized the night before under suspicion of dogfighting.

SERO staff arrived on the scene and soon located a dogfighting pit, broken down and covered up with plastic in the back yard. Sheriff's detectives, unfamiliar with animal fighting ventures, had not seen the pit when seizing other evidence.

Lt. Jim Corder of the Sheriff's Office described the dogs as "all torn up. Some had open wounds; others were scarred up," he said. SERO's Laura Bevan and Sandy Christiansen visited the dogs at the local shelter. "One female dog had no upper lips; her muzzle was basically torn off," according to Bevan. "Another was so emaciated and abused that she could barely stand. When she was given food, she wolfed it down as if she had not eaten in a long time. It was heartbreaking."

Three weeks later, SERO staff testified in court that because of the fighting history of the dogs, none could be adopted as pets. County Court Judge Steward Parsons agreed and regretfully signed for all the dogs to be euthanized. "In the end, it was the most humane action for the dogs," Bevan says. "You would endanger other animals and people if they were put back into the community. At least their lives as fighting animals are over. That life is a living hell."



LAURA BEVAN/HSUS

SERO Program Coordinator Sandy Christiansen visits with a dog who shows the terrible wounds of animal fighting.

Racetracks Win, Greyhounds Lose in Florida

Animal lovers suffered a disappointing loss last Election Day when Florida voters narrowly approved an amendment to the state's constitution allowing for expanded gambling at pari-mutuel facilities. The ballot measure, Amendment 4, allows dog track owners to install slot machines at tracks. This will provide tens of millions of dollars in annual revenue to a dying industry that's responsible for the deaths of thousands of young, healthy dogs each year. By propping up the industry with new funds, the greyhounds will continue to run for their lives even if no one is in the stands watching or betting on them.

The HSUS worked hard against Amendment 4, but despite the loss, it wasn't for naught. Track owners spent \$20 million to promote the amendment, and it passed only by the slim margin of 119,080 votes out of 7.14 million cast. This means millions of voters saw through the greyhound racing industry's efforts to enrich itself—and many no doubt became aware for the first time of the abuses inflicted on racing dogs.

As state lawmakers determine how to implement the amendment, The HSUS and other partners, such as Grey2K, an anti-greyhound racing coalition, will continue to oppose the expansion of gambling at Florida's 16 greyhound tracks. We hope our members join us in ending this abusive industry.

FL Animal Friend Plate Available

It's official! The Florida Animal Friend license plate will soon be on the back of vehicles across the state. Florida drivers can begin purchasing the plate—which features a dog and cat playing on the beach—this spring. The plate costs an additional \$25 dollars, with the extra monies going to programs to reduce the state's pet overpopulation problem. Animal lovers can personalize the plate with their pets' names for an additional fee.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are euthanized in shelters, killed on the streets, or left to fend for themselves after being dumped by uncaring owners. Many states, including Georgia, have animal license plates that fund the sterilization of companion animals, and Florida now has followed suit.

The funds from the plate's sale will go to Florida Animal Friend, Inc. (FAF), a new organization comprised of The HSUS, the Florida Veterinary Medical Association, the Florida Animal Control Association, as well as other humane groups and individuals. FAF will use the funds to give grants to organizations around the state to sterilize pets currently not being reached by existing programs.

FAF will be responsible for promoting the plate. Under the new state guidelines, the group must sell 1,000 plates a year or lose it. If you are a Florida driver, look for the Animal Friend license plate at your Department of Motor Vehicles office when you renew your annual registration. For more information, go to www.floridaanimalfriend.com.

SERO Director Laura Bevan celebrates availability of Florida's Animal Friend license plate with state lawmakers.



HSUS

Changing Lives in Terrell County, Georgia

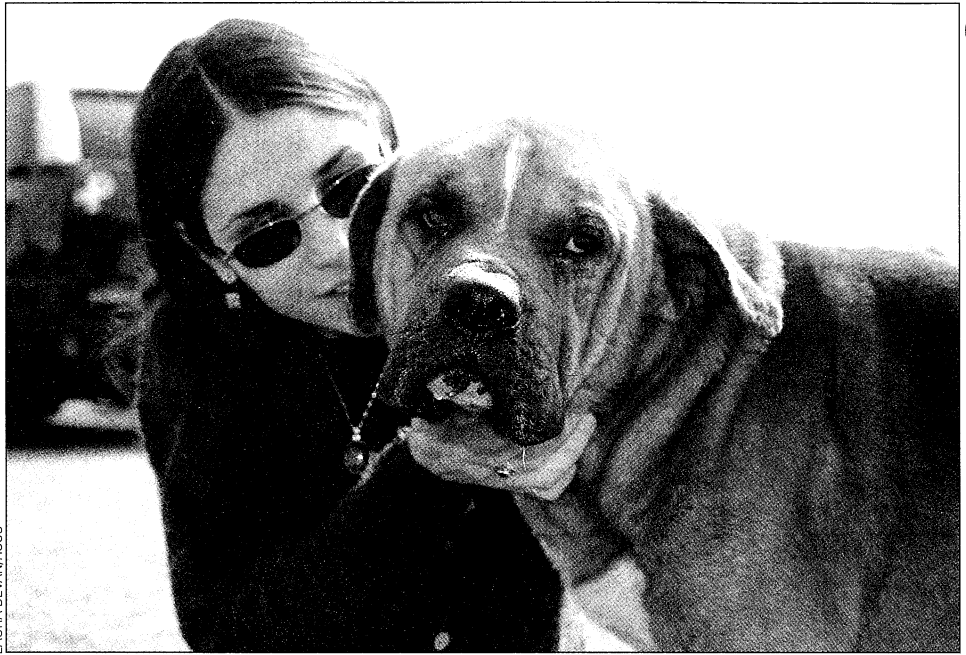
In many parts of our region—such as Terrell County, Georgia—people love their pets but cannot afford to provide them with routine veterinary care. By bringing veterinary services to poor and underserved communities in our region and around the globe, HSUS's Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) helps people care for their companion animals.

RAVS utilizes the services of volunteer veterinarians, technicians, and veterinary students from all over the country. For the students, the clinics are a great teaching tool and an excellent opportunity to practice what they have learned in school (under the careful supervision of certified veterinarians). For the community, the clinic brings veterinary care that pet owners may not be able to afford otherwise. RAVS provides not only essential services such as sterilizations and vaccinations, but also educational services such as talks on disease prevention and pet care.

That's why SERO joined a RAVS team at a Lions Club building in Dawson, Georgia, where volunteers and staff provided spay/neuter surgeries for more than 70 animals this past February. The Humane Society of Terrell County (HSTC) had contacted RAVS to assist with the sterilization of pets from its lowest income areas. The small organization works hard to help the citizens in its county but has been limited in being able to offer free spay/neuter. The RAVS clinic was a perfect way to assist them in this goal.

One lucky patient was Ranjan, a two-year-old shepherd mix and the best friend of a Terrell County boy named Frankie who had lost his parents and lives with his aunt. Ranjan arrived at the RAVS clinic on the end of a heavy chain. After RAVS staff and volunteers tested him for heartworm, neutered, and vaccinated him, HSTC made arrangements to treat Ranjan's heartworm and provide fencing so that he could live off of the chain. Frankie's aunt recently contacted HSTC to report how much happier Ranjan is since he's no longer chained.

While the RAVS program is designed for pet owners like Frankie—those who want to do the responsible thing for their pets but simply can't afford it—RAVS also helped several other homeless animals who found



LAURA BEVAN/HSUS

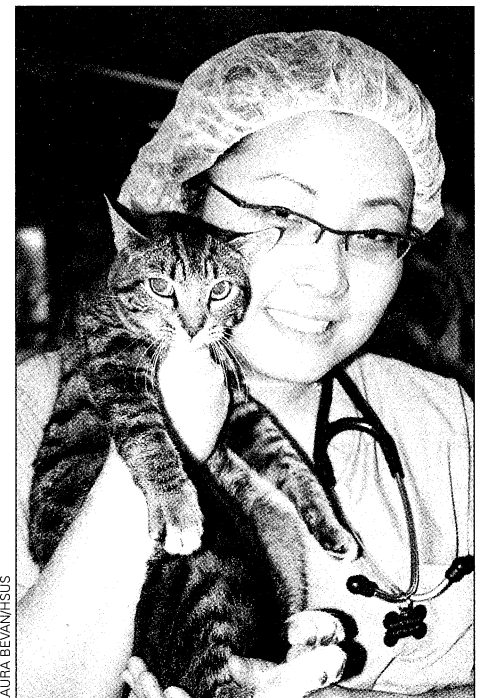
New SERO Program Coordinator Jen Hobgood with Sampson, a lucky dog who found not only veterinary care, but also a loving owner thanks to a recent RAVS clinic held in Dawson, Georgia.

their way to the Terrell County Clinic. One of these, a boxer mix clinic volunteers called Sampson, had been abandoned at the business next door to the clinic. According to the business's employees, Sampson had been homeless for at least a year. He was malnourished, heartworm positive, and had severely broken teeth as well as a skin condition exacerbated by living only off of scraps from workers' lunches.

During the clinic, Sampson enjoyed belly rubs and sandwiches, and as volunteers packed up the clinic on Sunday afternoon, Sampson rode away in the back of a Lincoln Expedition, headed for royal "spa" treatment at a local veterinary clinic. "I am so thankful to find my new friend with his gentle spirit," exclaims Sampson's new guardian, Kim Terrell. "I read the other day that saving one dog won't change the world, but the world will surely change for this one dog." Thanks to RAVS, HSTC, and dedicated volunteers, the world is a better place for many Terrell

County animal companions and their families.

More RAVS clinics are planned in 2005 for Georgia and Tennessee. For more information about RAVS, go to www.hsus.org/ravs.



LAURA BEVAN/HSUS

A volunteer veterinary student is happy to help a patient during the Terrell County RAVS clinic. RAVS provides excellent training for students while helping pet owners in need.



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counties on behalf of the state Division of Emergency Management. Temporary animal shelters were set up in each of the counties to both reunite lost pets with their owners and take in animals whose owners could no longer care for them. Donated pet food and supplies poured in from the public and corporations, and we then made it available to disaster victims for their animals.

Suncoast Humane Society, located in Charlotte County but mercifully spared the brunt of the storm, took in more than 650 animals, and stored pet food and supplies for the overall effort. Other Florida humane society staff members who offered assistance in the impacted areas often returned home with animals they could put up for

This kitten seems to be saying "thanks" to a disaster responder.

adoption, freeing up shelters in the disaster areas to focus their efforts on lost pets. The Florida Animal Control Association, the Florida Veterinary Medical Association, and the Florida Association of Kennel Clubs tapped their members to help, and they responded in force.

Since 1996, The HSUS has sponsored Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) training in Florida with the goal of having organized teams to assist during emergency situations. Those efforts paid off. Sumter County DART brought tractor trailers, a

recreational vehicle, and other equipment that allowed The HSUS to set up its Carmelita Animal Compound in Punta Gorda. Bay Area DART, the largest team in the state, continuously staffed temporary shelters in several of the counties. Teams from Sarasota, Manatee, and Hernando counties also pitched in, providing much needed relief.

By the beginning of September, the Hurricane Charley animal response was winding down. However, on September 5, Hurricane Frances took aim at the east coast of Florida and sloshed ashore along the Treasure Coast as a category 2 storm.

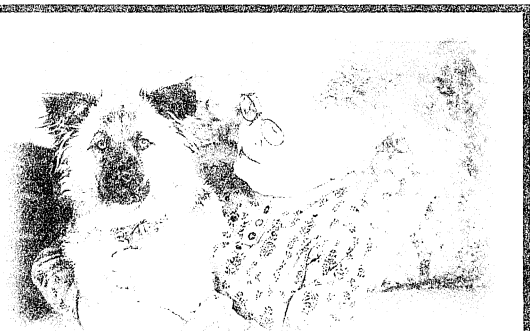
Frances was the opposite of Charley. Where he was fast and cut like a knife

through the peninsula, Frances was slow and bloated with rain. Joan Carlson of the Humane Society of Vero Beach in Indian River County stayed in the organization's new animal shelter along with staff, volunteers, and hundreds of dogs and cats. She described a storm that took almost 24 hours to pass, and pushed the limits of those trapped in the buildings with no power and little contact with the outside world. Later that shelter became the base for The HSUS's operations over several counties.

Less than two weeks later, Hurricane Ivan tore through the Caribbean with category 5 winds and rain. Entering the Gulf of Mexico, it was expected to make landfall along the Mississippi coast. However, "Ivan the Terrible" had other plans, and on September 16, he shifted to the northeast, ripping across the southeastern tip of Alabama and northwest Florida as a category 3 hurricane. Coastal communities were destroyed, and devastation occurred far inland. The HSUS fielded two teams in response to Ivan—one to assist animal efforts in Alabama and one in Florida.

The final indignity came September 25 when Hurricane Jeanne, another category 3 storm, made landfall just a few miles from where Frances had hit only 20 days before. Jeanne had spun harmlessly out in the Atlantic for some time before changing her mind, doing a U-turn, and heading straight for Florida's Treasure Coast. Once again, The HSUS based its efforts out of the Humane Society of Vero Beach, which sustained even more damage to its facility the second time around.

SERO Director Laura Bevan coordinated



Promoting the protection of all animals

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
1624 Metropolitan Circle, Suite B
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Director's Report



By Laura Bevan
Director of the Southeast Regional Office

Changing Times

As Bob Dylan sang, "The times, they are a' changing." Since last summer, that has become the mantra of our office, for both good and bad.

When the last SERO newsletter hit your mailbox, we were still responding to the four hurricanes that impacted Florida over a six-week period from August to October. While those storms changed so many lives

and so much of the landscape in Florida, thankfully Tallahassee, our home base, was spared. That allowed us to focus our time and energy helping others around the state. Though by the time Hurricane Jeanne rammed herself across the state along an almost identical path to Frances, energy was in short supply.

While the face of Florida was changing, so was our office. In November, Andrea White, SERO administrative assistant, resigned after 17 years with The HSUS to pursue her dream of going to college. Andrea and I started our journey with HSUS within months of one another, so it is strange that our paths have diverged. Best wishes to her on her new journey!

On a much sadder note, Jackie McTigue, SERO's program specialist, passed away in mid-November after fighting cancer for nearly a year. Jackie was with the HSUS for eight years, and it was a joy to know and work with her. Our thoughts are with her family, including her husband Bill and daughter Katie.

At the beginning of the year, two new faces joined our team. Jen Hobgood, a

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companion animal response efforts for the state in all the storms. "Looking back, it is still hard to comprehend everything that happened to assist animals during that six weeks," she says. "So many people and agencies pulled together and did incredible work despite personal losses and sheer exhaustion. Animals who were available for adoption were moved to other parts of the state and country to give them a chance for a new life. Many counties opened pet friendly shelters so evacuated residents could keep their animals close during the ordeals.

Groups that don't always agree on issues put those differences aside and worked side by side to help both human and animal victims alike. It was incredible, but an experience I hope we don't repeat for a long time."

Contacting HSUS

Write:

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1624 Metropolitan Cir., Ste. B
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Call:

850-386-3435

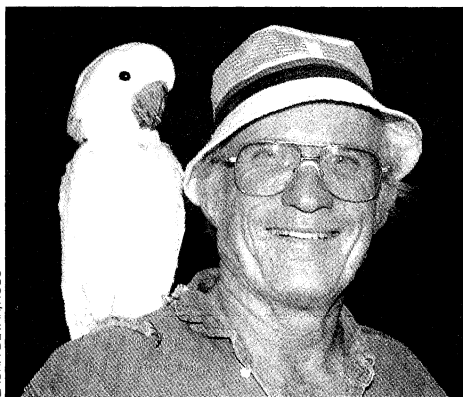
Fax:

850-386-4534

Web Page:

www.hsus.org/sero

Promoting the protection of all animals



Cats and dogs weren't the only ones to benefit from HSUS's hurricane response.

professor of English, left the classroom to join SERO as a program coordinator. Nancy Krzycki, who moved from Nebraska to Florida just in time to experience our series of hurricanes, filled our administrative assistant position. We welcome them both and wish them a long career with HSUS.

The face of the region has also changed by expanding to include two new states. At the end of January, North Carolina and Tennessee joined Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina as part of the Southeast Region of The HSUS. We welcome the HSUS members in those states and look forward to serving them and the animals there.

This year promises to be another of ongoing changes. As we prepare for this year's hurricane season, and pray there is no repeat of 2004, we are also looking forward to increasing our efforts against all forms of animal fighting. There is no community in this region not impacted by these activities, and we hope you will support us in our endeavors.

Best wishes for 2005, and may all the changes coming your way be for the better!

The *SERO Regional News* is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, Southeast Regional Office, 1624 Metropolitan Cir., Ste. B, Tallahassee, FL 32308; 850-386-3435. Laura Bevan, director. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed on federal holidays.

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